

# **Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; And Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

## **SBVI State Rehabilitation Council**

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Board), the state rehabilitation council for the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Division), is in place to advise the Division in accordance with Title I, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The Board advises the Division in the development of state plans, policy related to the expenditure of federal and state funds and the coordination and planning for service delivery to individuals involved in vocational rehabilitation and independent living services.

The Board serves as a representative for all individuals who are blind or visually impaired needing vocational rehabilitation and independent living services within the state. The Board's mission statement reflects these priorities: *"The mission of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is to promote independence, employment and full inclusion for all citizens who are blind or visually impaired."* All Board agendas are developed by the Board's Executive Committee with the Division Director. Policies are provided to Board members in draft format to provide the opportunity for input prior to finalization of the policies. No recommendations by the Board of SBVI were rejected by the Division during the plan period.

**Public Meetings** - Public meetings are held on an annual basis to solicit input into the State Plan as well as to identify priorities for improving services to citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of SBVI recommends topics to be prioritized for discussion and makes recommendations for locations for the meetings. Board members facilitate each of the meetings. Based on advice from the Board, consumer organizations host the meetings by circulating meeting announcements to constituents and providing refreshments and local transportation for the meetings. In addition, the Board recommended that a consultant be hired to conduct focus groups to solicit input from individuals who have received services from SBVI.

*The Division agreed with the Board's recommendations related to public meetings. The Division held meetings at locations recommended by the Board with Board members serving as facilitators at the meetings. One*

*public meeting was held in conjunction with a quarterly Board meeting as recommended. A public meeting was also held in conjunction with an organization of the blind's annual state convention.*

**Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities** - An annual "Governor's Luncheon" is held in recognition of individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This annual event is a joint effort of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services. The Board of SBVI voted to sponsor this event and support attendance by members. In addition, the Board nominated a member for the public personnel award.

*The Division supported the Board's recommendation to support luncheon costs and attendance by Board members. The Division also supported the Board in submitting a nomination for an individual to be considered for a Governor's award.*

**Consumer Satisfaction Survey** - A Board committee recommended the format and questions for the consumer satisfaction survey. Results from the 2007 survey compared favorably to the previous year's survey. Based on previous survey results, SBVI received high marks from consumers on the quality of services provided. SBVI scored lowest on questions pertaining to satisfaction with the level of earnings and benefits that successfully rehabilitated consumers received from their employers.

*The Division worked closely with the Board to ensure accessibility of the survey. Analysis of responses from the focus groups and consumer satisfaction survey addressed potential concerns and best practices.*

**Public Relations Activities by Board Members** – The Board Public Relations committee prepared a nomination for an individual for the Governor's Awards recognizing employment of people with disabilities. In addition the Board voted to support an Americans with Disabilities Act celebration; National Disability Employment Month activities; and Mentoring Day.

*SBVI supported the Public Relation committee's recommendations and assisted with coordination and support of the activities recommended by Board.*

**Nominations for Board Vacancies** – The Board of SBVI recommended individual's names to be submitted to the Governor's office for consideration of appointment for Board vacancies.

*The Division submitted names recommend by the Board for consideration of appointment by the Governor. The Governor's office appointed those whose names were submitted.*

**Board Representation at Consumer Organization Conventions** - The Board of SBVI has made the commitment to financially support the attendance of consumers and a representative of the Board each year at state conventions of consumer organizations such as National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota and South Dakota Association of the Blind.

*The Division supported the Board's recommendation for Board member representation at consumer organization conventions and Board sponsorship of stipends for individuals who are blind or visually impaired to attend the state conventions of consumer organizations. Board and public meetings are held in conjunction with consumer organization conventions, when possible.*

**Promotion of Employment of Individuals Who Are Blind** – The Board recommended that administrative positions that become vacant in the Division of SBVI be opened and advertised to offer an opportunity to individuals who are blind to serve in upper level management positions.

*The Division Director agreed to implement the Board's recommendation for promoting opportunities for employment to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The Board's recommendations were also shared with the Secretary of the Department of Human Services and the Bureau of Personnel Human Resource Manager for the Department of Human Services.*

**Visions Newsletter** – The Board of SBVI recommended that the Division consider resurrecting the Visions newsletter for distribution to constituents. The Board also made recommendations for content of the newsletter.

*Recommendations were implemented in the January 2007 edition of the newsletter including an article by the Board Chair. Two additional issues of the newsletter were distributed in July of 2007 and January 2008. Input is solicited from the Board on content of the newsletter.*

**Transition Services for Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired** – The Board of SBVI recommended that the Division sponsor activities to address leadership, career planning and skills of blindness needs of transition age students who are blind or visually impaired. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with students to plan their participation as part of Individual Plans for Employment.

*Transition week was held July 23-27, 2007 at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls. Activities were based on suggestions by the Board of SBVI with Board members presenting to students on opportunities for citizens who are blind as well as the role of the Board.*

*The Division sponsors attendance of high school student who are blind or visually impaired at the annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). The YLF for Students with Disabilities is a unique career leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities to serve as delegates from their communities. Students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this five-day event. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with students to plan their participation as part of Individual Plans for Employment.*

**Assistive Technology Services** – The Board of SBVI participates in making recommendations for assistive technology activities. Dakota Link, the states assistive technology project, provides one to one evaluation and training on a fee for service basis to those referred via an agreement with the division. An employee of Dakota Link is the Community Rehabilitation Program representative on the Board of SBVI. During FFY 2007 the Board advised the Division on the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Loan/Lease Program.

*The Division supported Board recommendations related to assistive technology devices and services for consumers of SBVI including implementation of the CCTV Loan/Lease Program. The Board recommended economic need considerations for the program and that deposits be made by consumers of the program for units leased or loaned. Eligibility is based on Title VII Chapter II program requirements as supported by the Board.*

**Board Input on SBVI Policy** – All policies are provided to Board members in draft format for their input prior to implementation.

*No policies were developed and implemented during FY 2007. The recently created Board Strategic Planning and Policy Subcommittee is charged with reviewing all new policies and reporting back to the board.*

**Focus Groups-** The Board recommended that using focus groups may be an effective method of obtaining useful input from former consumers. SBVI requested bids and hired an independent contractor as recommended by the board to conduct a series of focus groups comprised of former and some current clients of SBVI.

*The Division fully supported the idea of using focus groups as a method to obtain input on programs from current and former consumers. The Division assisted the contractor in the development of questions and a “script” that he could use when working with the focus group participants. The Division reported back to the board on findings, best practices, and suggestions for improvement that were obtained from the focus groups that were conducted.*

**Mentoring Program-** The Board supported the Division in developing a mentoring program that is designed to extend support, encouragement, and knowledge to active consumers of SBVI from experienced blind citizens. The Board Strategic Planning and Policy Committee was consulted during the development of the policy and accompanying mentor and mentee forms.

*The Division implemented Board recommendations in the development of policy and procedures for the mentoring program. The Board voted unanimously to support the mentoring program and will continue to give input on promoting and managing the mentoring program.*

**Independent Living Services-** In light of the loss of an FTE that provided services under the Independent Living Blind program in the SFY 2007 budget request, the Board recommended strategies that could be implemented in order to measure what effect the loss of that FTE had on the quality of services and the ability to provide outreach to all parts of the state.

*The Division incorporated additional data collection methods into the quality control measures that were in place at the time. The Division will continue to collect information on the provision of services and will report findings back to the board. The Division has also been working on alternative*

*strategies that have been implemented to ensure that quality services continue to be provided.*

**Board Input on 2009 State Plan** The Division of SBVI worked with the Board on updates to the SBVI 2009 State Plan as an agenda item at quarterly meetings with input from the strategic planning and policy subcommittee between meetings. The subcommittee helped the Division to prioritize strategies and organize information gleaned from a variety of sources to help guide the Division their efforts to provide quality services. All recommendations were brought to the full board for discussion and recommendations. The Board unanimously supported a motion to work together with planning activities related to the strategic plan, state plan and quality assurance plan and to merge activities to relieve the administrative burden and simplify the process so it is easier to monitor.

The Board voted unanimously to support the state plan updates as developed by the Division.